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THE JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

A CONCEPTION OF PHILOSOPHY

IT is with some misgivings that one embarks upon the adventure of telling philosophers what philosophy is about. It might prove as perilous as a similar attempt to disclose to artists the aims of art and the metaphysical implications of creative activity. Even though they should not take your words unto themselves—responding blandly “yes’m,” or waxing indignant at some unintentional imputation (and I know not which is the worse)—there is always the possibility of their dismissing the whole matter with a shrug (which would be worst of all). And might they not be right? Why bother with a definition of art? It is the work of art which is important. Why define philosophy either? Why take so much trouble to explain what you are doing and why you are doing it? It’s a sign of decadence!

And yet so much of the philosophy of to-day is engaged in defining itself—philosophy which breathes of a philosophical renaissance rather than of decadence. Of course, there is precedent for it. Plato it was, I believe, who began it, and in this respect at least there have been those who have not failed to profit by his example. Witness the numerous articles appearing in this JOURNAL. Philosophers do seem to find it necessary to talk about the function of philosophy. Bertrand Russell, for instance, begins his *Problems of Philosophy* by asking: “Is there any knowledge in the world which is so certain that no reasonable man could doubt it?” and elsewhere admonishes us against forgetting that “the philosophy which is to be genuinely inspired by the scientific spirit must deal with somewhat dry and abstract matters, and must not hope to find an answer to the practical problems of life.” It is “the theoretical understanding of the world, which is the aim of philosophy.”

Professor Dewey, as leader of the Creative Intelligenzia, voices their views somewhat differently: “Philosophy,” he says, “claims to be one form or mode of knowing. If, then, the conclusion is reached that knowing is a way of employing empirical occurrences with respect to increasing power to direct the consequences which flow

from things, the application of the conclusion must be made to philosophy. It, too, becomes not a contemplative survey of existence nor an analysis of what is past and done with, but an outlook upon future possibilities with reference to attaining the better and averting the worse."

The New Realists, in their turn, inform us that their aim is among other things, the "correction of established habits of thought."

In this Russell, and Dewey, and the New Realists do agree, that most of the philosophy up to Russell or Dewey or Neo-Realism, as the case may be, has misconceived its function, and that if the claims of philosophers had not been absurd, their achievements would have been greater. And then each proceeds to explain what philosophy should be and what philosophers should do. And thereupon they cease to speak alike.

Now, I can not quite bring myself to the point of believing that most of the philosophy since Plato, or since Bacon, or even since Spinoza, has so completely mistaken what it was about. I wonder if there might not be five and forty ways of being a philosopher, as there are of composing tribal lays, and every single one of them—or almost every one—right, for a particular reason. And I wonder whether the reason for the rightness can not be expressed in some other way than by a weighing of evidence, a consideration of worth and of shortcomings, and an inevitable arrival at the irritatingly moderate conclusion that "there is much to be said on both sides."

I, too, would play the game of defining philosophy, not, however, as a prelude to the sudden production of any philosophical system or carefully unsystematized philosophy, as the case may be, which depends upon my definition; but rather as a protest that so much energy should be expended on preliminary flourishes, statements of policy—on polemics, in short—which might be used either in the organization of a body of scientifically philosophical truth, or in discovering and pursuing definite means for the improvement of the conditions of life here below.

For philosophers have, broadly speaking and in the main, divided in their view about the relative importance of these two types of philosophical activity. The line of cleavage has been particularly marked since what is generally viewed as the opening of the modern era in philosophy. Descartes and Spinoza, with their passion for clarity of thought, precision, and scientific certainty, are the intellectual forbears of such philosophers as Russell and the six Realists and the German logicians. And Bacon, in his radical protest against the formalism of Scholastic philosophy, and his declaration that knowledge means the power to utilize theory in the interest of

human life, is the not so very remote ancestor of Professor Dewey in his reaction against the idealistic formalism of Germany, England, and America, in his demand for a sweeping away of traditional philosophic problems whose genuineness is questionable, and in his emphasis on the necessary connection between concreteness of thought and activity which is to be *both* moral and successful.

In this paper I am not attempting to derive my definition of philosophy from a consideration of these two quite different notions of what philosophy should be. What I am trying to do is to set forth a conception of philosophy in terms of which both the instrumentalist and the scientific views of philosophy find a common, broader interpretation.

Let me recall to your minds the well-known view that philosophy is the attempt to evaluate the conclusions of the various sciences, "taking its material ready-made from the sciences," in Miss Calkins's words, "and simply reasoning about them and from them." According to James too "philosophy has come to denote ideas of universal scope . . . and the philosopher is the man who finds the most to say about them." The definition of philosophy as the science of sciences, and the figure of the wheel, with the sciences as the spokes and philosophy at the hub, come to mind at once. I believe, however, that the position of philosophy is at once more humble and more arduous. It may well begin, not with the aim of achieving an organization from above, of being inclusive, but of being exact in any small realm which it may choose to isolate. For when any sort of inquiry becomes self-conscious, looks about itself, and examines the assumptions on which it is proceeding, or considers its relations to any other human activity, it promptly turns into philosophy. Thus philosophy, as I understand it, does not reside permanently and peacefully at the hub of the wheel, but spends at least as great a part of the time as a wanderer along the rim, a traveler from spoke to spoke. There are frequent excursions hubward, it is true, and temporary surveys from this central vantage point. But sooner or later philosophy must return to its more humble position. Or, it might be possible to imagine philosophy as a dual personality, having the strange power of being in two places at once. At any rate, the figure of philosophy as a dweller on the periphery rather than at the center of the circle, does greater justice, I think, than the older view to the fact that a philosophy which is not intimately bound up with at least one important branch of human enquiry, which does not receive its impetus or take its departure from an intimate, vivid acquaintance with some specific science or art, so often seems futile and empty.

When philosophy is viewed as the attempt to discover and express the relationships between the various interests and activities of human life, certain aspects of the philosophic enterprise come to light. One is that philosophy is simply an intensifying, an amplifying, and a clarifying, of ordinary living, and that there is a perfect continuity between the most esoteric and abstract philosophy and common every-day experience. For both represent the constant and universal human demand for a consistent, organized experience, a perspective on life, so to speak. It is impossible for me to prove this by a description of the way in which meaningful experience begins and develops. I never was a baby, that I remember; none of the babies with whom I am acquainted tell their thoughts; and it seems even more futile to appeal to fox-terriers and earth-worms. But it might be illuminating to consider what really happens when an ordinary human being—not a philosopher, except in spite of himself—reads a novel, for example. He understands it in terms of his acquaintance with people; or he may bring to bear his knowledge of history, or of the social or political or economic conditions which it depicts or interprets; or of these conditions as its author's back-ground of experience and their influence on his ideas and his attitude toward life. He may relate it to other novels and other authors, with respect to its style, or its subject-matter, or just a few wayward and incidental notions which it may happen to contain. In other words, in proportion as the experience of reading that novel is rich and vivid and absorbing, it is a relating of the novel in as many ways as possible to the reader's background of experience. Sometimes—as in the case of one's first acquaintance with a Russian novel, for example, in which the technique and the subject-matter are relatively unfamiliar; or in one's first encounter with the German Romantic poets, or with impressionism in music or painting or verse, or with Japanese drama—the relating is not easily done, and sometimes necessitates the working over of a great part of the background against which the new experience is projected. In other words, our standards do change as our experience grows. And sometimes the new experience is rejected as comparatively meaningless, or at any rate temporarily unassimilable. But the rejection itself has meaning, and in this sense the experience is related to a more or less organized larger whole.

This tying up of meanings and memories extends right through the experience of every-day, from the tasting of a strange new breakfast food, to considering the prospective site for the town fire-house, or the advisability of sending missionaries to the Esquimaux. A new experience, in short, if it is at all intelligible is understood in

terms of a whole system of experiences, and is criticized in the light of it. The new experience is placed against a background of principles or presuppositions, the residue of a tentatively organized past in a similar attempt to make a whole of conscious life. And often, as I said before, it is impossible to assimilate the new experience without adjusting or reworking the background, and changing at least some of the presuppositions.

When the reader of novels or the listener to music or the viewer of paintings, becomes conscious of what he is doing, does it deliberately, and publicly voices his opinions, we call him a critic. And, not immediately, perhaps, but in the long run, I think, we call his criticisms good just to the extent to which they furnish *us* with a technique, however imperfect, for the organizing, however tentative, of similar experiences—and, of course, by differentiating, of contrasting ones.

Now, the philosopher, I take it, consciously or unconsciously is trying to do for some or all of the experiences¹ and activities and values of life what the literary critic, for example, is or ought to be trying to do for literature—that is, trying to discover their relationship to the other experiences¹ and activities and values of life, and perhaps to life as a whole. He is a Critic, in the most complete and general sense of the word. For criticism is simply a consideration of things in their relations to each other. When you criticize a thing, you view it in the light of another fact or group of facts, and try to formulate the relation between them. For criticism is not evaluation, if evaluation be taken to mean putting a value on something which is originally negative or inherently valueless. Values are spontaneous, as much given as the greenness of the grass, or the hardness of granite, or the shortest distance from here to San Francisco, or the perplexing circularity of Columbia Library. These things are not created by our experience. They are discovered. And similarly we do not create values. We discover them. It is perfectly natural that we should prize health, and comfort, and clear cool air, and friendship, and good-tasting food, and economic independence, and beautiful paintings, and courage, and the satisfaction of curiosity. The important thing is to see them in their relation to each other, to achieve a perspective. And the attempt to attain this perspective we call philosophy.

Emphasis is often laid on the valuing aspect of philosophy. The relationship between values (with the stress on values rather than on the relating of them) is, I believe, often taken to be the

¹ The term "experience" being used to include the experience of fact in the realm of physical or logical "structure."

special field for the philosophy. The moral or the esthetic judgment, at first blush, does seem inevitable for work of philosophic significance. Yet what I feel I have not sufficiently made clear is that it is the relating, carried on in the most rigorous and thoroughgoing manner, which is the keynote of philosophic activity. The relating of values is only one phase or branch of this activity. Values are inevitably dealt with if the enterprise of relating be carried far enough. The value judgment does enter into philosophy, just as it does into the experience of reading a novel or a poem. But the relation of better or worse than something else, is only one of the relations discovered and articulated in that illuminating and rationalizing of experience which is philosophy. The desire to see things clearly and whole does include the wish to know the relative importance of this or that fact or endeavor in the light of human life as a whole. I think it is worth while, however, to emphasize the fact that *any* step in the process of integrating experience, so long as it be a conscious, rigorous attempt to see one thing in the light of another, may rightly be called philosophical. Not logic only, but all philosophy is a study of relations.

Such a view of philosophy is much more pluralistic than the older classic view. It gives the title of philosopher to those of less Protean capacity than the philosopher is usually supposed to exhibit. Whether or not it is possible to achieve any permanently significant conclusions from a consideration of, say, the relation of poetry to push-pin, or of economic conditions to standards of achievement, or of a novel to a political theory, without dealing with *all* the values of life and a general conception of life to boot, may be doubtful. But the question itself, as I see it, is not the crucial one. However far the philosopher may find himself driven toward inclusiveness as his enquiry proceeds, he is as much engaged in the pursuit of philosophy at the beginning of his task as later, a philosopher as well when he is engaged in discovering the relation of one science to another (of the methods and aims of history to those of anthropology, for instance), as when he is dealing with the significance for conduct of the theory of evolution, or with the relations of the great value groups—the beautiful, the true, and the good.

This means that philosophy is bound up with science, just as it is fused and interpenetrated and continuous with every-day living and with the esthetic experience. If, as Spencer says, "Philosophy is completely unified knowledge," then we have no philosophy at all. But if philosophy be the attempt to achieve a more complete unification of knowledge than we have at present, then philosophy is one phase of science and of art and of common experience. It is en-

lightening to recall the fact that among the ancients science and philosophy were largely identified. The mathematician was the philosopher, and the philosopher was the physicist. For to them philosophy was simply an intelligent attempt to understand the world in which we live. The philosopher, according to Plato, was one who knew "the true being of each thing." Even when one reads the history of the philosophy of not so very ancient times, he frequently finds it difficult to decide whether he is studying philosophy or science. And in spite of the growing tendency of the scientists and the philosophers to hedge off porcupinely from each other, I should say that the difficulty exists even to-day. Is Bertrand Russell a philosopher when he is criticizing the primary concepts of number, or when he is engaged in the attempt to reduce mathematics to logic (*i.e.*, when he is relating these sciences)? Or is he a philosopher only when he is considering the subject of mathematics itself as one interest among others that human beings pursue, and expressing a judgment as to its supreme value and beauty. Or is it only when he is giving an interpretation of the meaning of life as a whole, as in *The Free Man's Worship*? And what of logic and metaphysics themselves? Are we to consider them sciences or branches of philosophy? Their classification seems to me to be rather arbitrary, on the whole, depending to a great degree on your point of view and your native or acquired predispositions. If exactness of detail in the description of "structures" (to use Professor Woodbridge's term) be the mark of science, then logic, without a doubt, and metaphysics in proportion as it becomes exact, are sciences. But then esthetics, and even ethics—very slowly, perhaps, but none the less surely—are also on their way to become sciences. There seems to be a grain of truth in the cynicism that philosophy is nothing but bad science. It is a curious and rather pathetic situation for philosophy, that the results of the philosophic pursuit of relations, just to the extent to which they become exact and indisputable, are constantly being taken over by one or another of the sciences. And one by one mathematics, physics, astronomy, biology, psychology, and latest of all sociology, have left the philosophic roof-tree and gone off on their own, so to speak.

Yet the situation, rightly viewed, is not so discouraging for philosophy, after all. It simply means that a relation which is more or less completely determined and known may at times and according to one's point of view assume the status of a fact; and that any group of such clarified and interpreted facts, tentatively organized in the light of some determining principle or group of principles, is what we mean by a science.

There is no one region of philosophic fact, and no peculiarly labelled, quite indisputably philosophic problems. Philosophy takes its material to be criticized and reorganized wherever it may happen to find it. And however many young sciences go forth from the philosophic roof-tree, the house itself will never be empty so long as science finds anything left to discover and describe. What is more, there is a constant, if often unpremeditated returning, as it were, of the sciences to the house of philosophy. For the moment mathematics, for example, raises its head from the contemplation of its own particular discoveries and considers its relation to logic or music or chemistry or the Beautiful, that moment it turns into philosophy. And the moment the economist or the lawyer or the politician articulates to himself the place of his particular occupation in any larger setting, he becomes a philosopher. Philosophy is found not only above, "relating the big conclusions of the various branches of science," but right within the fields of the sciences. The two are mingled and interpenetrated. One might express their relationship by borrowing a figure from Professor Montague, but using it in a different connection. The line of chalk on the black-board is something more than an infinite number of points. These chalk-specks are arranged linear-fashion. And the arrangement is as real as the chalk-bits. Only, to have a *chalk*-line on the black-board, you must have both the infinite number of chalk-bits *and* the linear relation of them. One can not get one without the other. So with the relation of science and philosophy. The scientific enterprise *is* philosophical, just in so far as it is a "progressive integration of experience," to use a phrase of Santayana's.

This progressive organization, with the relating of interests and activities of every sort, makes intelligible the notion of different levels, as it were, of philosophy—of philosophies "of a higher order," just as there are "propositions of a higher order," to use Bertrand Russell's expression. And for the philosophies as for the propositions, the term *higher* carries no laudatory connotation whatsoever. It is simply a fact that the social sciences, for instance, are on a different relational level than the natural sciences, inasmuch as the social sciences themselves represent a wider, more comprehensive, more complete integration of interests and a partial evaluation of human activities. That is, with respect to their subject-matter they are on a different philosophical level than the natural sciences. And in a like manner, in the consideration of the relationship of the beautiful, the good, and the true, or in the criticism of the critical activity itself as one type of interest among others, we have philosophy on still higher levels—always bearing in mind

the perfectly neutral sense, so to speak, in which the term *higher* is used. An infinite regress in the discovery of relations and inter-relations and relations between relations, is set up. But then, the effect of an infinite upon you depends on your own attitude toward it.

But, you cry, isn't this all fantastic and absurd? What you are doing is not distinguishing and defining philosophy, but obliterating distinctions, stretching the term philosophy to include things with which it never dreamed of being associated. "If," as Professor Morris Cohen points out, "the Holy Sepulchre be everywhere, one can not effectively preach a crusade to redeem it from the infidel." Now, I believe that it is absurd to make such an extension in the use of terms that all distinctions are smothered under a blanket of inclusiveness. But I believe it is equally absurd to make distinctions where none exist in fact. Far truer than our present-day contrasting of science and philosophy, was the older distinction between "natural philosophy" and "moral philosophy," and I wish we might return to it. After all (if one could accomplish the feat without resembling too absurdly the glib narrator who piquantly ends his story in the fashion just opposite to the expectation which he had carefully aroused—a "sell," I believe it is technically termed) one might be tempted to voice one's wonder whether the supposedly indubitable importance of a distinction between science and philosophy might not be the result either of a too-jealous clinging to traditional and sometimes outworn philosophic problems and prerogatives; or of a not-quite-nicely balanced sense of values—a proverbially philosophic lack of humor might be another way of putting it. One might be tempted to wonder what difference it makes, after all, whether a problem be a problem for science or a problem for philosophy, so long as the problem itself be a genuine and significant one. And whether it is so tremendously necessary that we have any definition of philosophy, even though courses purporting to introduce us to the subject have still to be given. For philosophy, so far as I can see, is simply that love of wisdom of which Plato speaks. He might have added that the philosophic person is much more important, in the long run, than the philosophic problem. It might be a good thing, practically, if philosophers and scientists and artists forgot to argue about the function of philosophy and science and art, and devoted themselves to the discovery of things that are *so*, in whatever portion of the discoverable universe, natural or moral, most happens to interest them—whether it be the realm of mass and weight, or of logic, or of values, or of musical combinations, or of the reasons and the validity of stand-

ards of judgment themselves, or of the relation of any of these to any or all of the others.

And it is just this sort of thing that philosophers used to do. Most of them up until the time of Socrates were engaged in criticizing our notions of the physical world. It is true, they had a weakness for trying to solve all the problems of the nature of man and of the universe according to a single formula, and we smile at them—and do the same things ourselves, at least those of us who are idealists, or Freudians, or vegetarians, or Guild Socialists, or believers in New Thought. It is true also that the pre-Socratics sometimes tried to solve physical problems dialectically, poor souls. But the genuine philosophic impulse was there, the impulse to understand things in terms of each other; only, in the case of the Pythagoreans, for instance, the impulse was to understand everything in terms of their experience of number.

With the Sophists, philosophy takes the form of a criticism of the standards of morality and social life. Socrates continued this criticism, only with more rigor and honesty, criticizing as well the skeptical and individualistic tendency of the Sophists. His uncompromising demand that we say what we mean and mean what we say, led him also to demand that we criticize the concepts we employ, and find out what we mean by such notions as piety, justice, moderation, courage, cowardice and other terms whose meanings we usually take for granted.

Plato extended the Socratic criticism to cover the entire social life, which he judged according to ideals of human life and conduct which were themselves criticized.

We hear so much about the "critical" philosophy of Kant; and yet, so far as I can see, all philosophy is critical by reason of its very nature. When it is not, we call it poetry, or, if we are *very* severe in *our* criticism, or happen to have been particularly irritated by it, we call it dogmatism. It would be vain to attempt to trace even the main currents of the critical movements through its history, showing in what ways and in what various fields the critical activity has manifested itself. I shall simply point out a few of the interests of philosophers of the present day.

William James was chiefly interested in relating the results of investigation in the realm of the biological sciences to conduct, and in pointing out what he supposed to be the consequences for theoretical knowledge. The occupation of many of his and our contemporaries has been to criticize his methods and his conclusions. James's other main interest was the psychological warrant for religious faith.

Among living philosophers, Santayana is chiefly interested in criticizing the various values of life in the light of their relation to each other and to a conception of human life, which in turn he has tested in its relation to fact, to logic, and to practise. Incidentally, he is criticizing other philosophers and other attitudes toward life both logically and on the ground of their implications for the whole of life. His *Life of Reason* is a critique of human life in which science and art and religion and the social values are viewed, each in its relation to the other values of human life.

Bertrand Russell's interest in science is of a very different sort from that of Santayana. His earlier work is primarily concerned with problems of scientific method in their relation to logic. In his later social philosophy he is dealing with the relation between ideal and practical needs, with the relation of expressions of impulse to a satisfactory life and its conditions. He is engaged in describing the relations between economics, politics, education, industry, instinctive human nature and human ideals.

Poincaré, the great French scientist, becomes a philosopher when he examines his pursuit with the purpose of finding out just what it is he is doing. Like the earlier Russell, he is interested in discovering the interrelations of the various sciences and of analyzing their ultimate concepts. He is a philosopher on a different level, so to speak, when he steps aside to talk about the whole enterprise of science in its relation to the other phases of human activity and the place of the scientific and the practical interests in human life.

Sometimes the philosophical critics deal with the values of life in their relation to some special interest or some particular concept. Thus Mr. Laski is interested in criticizing the concept of sovereignty and of the state. Dean Pound is dealing with the nature and basis and ideal of law. The relation of the state to economic and industrial groups is the chief concern of the political philosophers of England and France, and lately of America—such men as J. A. Hobson, G. D. H. Cole, A. R. Orage and others of the Guild Socialist movement in England, and Duguit, Durkheim, Levine, and Sorel in France—to mention only a few.

Professor Dewey is interested in criticizing the values and activities of life, and the rôle of philosophy in life, particularly with reference to conduct and the improvement of the conditions necessary to a satisfactory life. "What serious-minded men not engaged in the professional business of philosophy want most to know," he says, in his essay on "The Recovery of Philosophy," is what modifications and abandonments of intellectual inheritance are required by the newer industrial, political, and social movements. They

want to know what these newer movements mean when translated into general ideas. Unless professional philosophy can mobilize itself sufficiently to assist in this clarification and redirection of men's thoughts, it is likely to get more and more side-tracked from the main currents of contemporary life." It is in the light of his conception of the rôle of philosophy in life that he questions the genuineness of traditional philosophic problems.

Thus, broadly speaking, the types of philosophy depend on the types of subject-matter dealt with. The line of cleavage, as I have noted, is between the "social" and the "scientific" philosophies. A recognition of the fundamental similarity of their enterprise would, however, do much toward clearing the intellectual atmosphere. Since Aristotelian completeness is an impossibility to-day, philosophers, if they are to accomplish anything of real importance, must of necessity be partial in their endeavors. The remedy for the possible evils of philosophical partiality is not a vain attempt to be all-inclusive, but rather wholeness of vision, a recognition of the relation of one type of philosophical activity to another.

By this I do not mean that every aspect and tenet of either philosophical humanism or philosophical intellectualism is equally acceptable or valid. But a philosopher may be a philosopher even though he make mistakes. What I am speaking of is the status of the different types of philosophical interest. Each is equally relevant to human life (an irritatingly moderate conclusion, I know), provided that neither commits the cardinal philosophical sin of taking itself, in its partiality, to be the sum of philosophy. So that when one considers human needs and values as somehow not inclusive of intellectual needs and values, he is making as vicious an abstraction as one who fails to remember that "the sincere dialectician," to use Santayana's words, "must stand upon human, Socratic ground."

By this I do not mean that everything that is being done in philosophy is quite as important as everything else. Some interests and some values *are* more fundamental than others. This itself is a philosophical question. I only mean that philosophy is philosophy on whatever level it is found. All criticism is not equally important. But it is all critical.

And, as I tried to make clear, to say that philosophy is criticism does not mean that philosophy is in any sense an evaluation from above. Philosophy is not the construction of ends, but the discernment and relating of them. And this illuminating and ordering of ends is only one phase of the Life of Reason, the "progressive integration of experience" in the attempt to satisfy an instinctive and

persistent craving for consistency in experience—in pure knowledge, as it were, and in conduct, and between the two. In Santayana's words (once again), "To understand is pre-eminently to live, moving not by stimulation and external compulsion, but by inner direction and control." The demand at the basis of the whole enterprise is, I believe, an esthetic demand, a passion for order and harmony and lucidity. The final test of a philosophy, I believe, is its power to satisfy this demand.

But is this not turning philosophy, or criticism, over to subjectivism and intellectual anarchy? If there are no objective standards of judgment—why then argue about a novel or a painting or a social theory or a philosophy of life? In matters of taste there can be no disputing. I do not believe, however, that such an interpretation of criticism means consigning it to the depths of "mere" impressionism. What the critics of the theory of the esthetic bias in the philosophic enterprise overlook, is that few human beings knowingly and willingly play the fool, even though it be the blessed fool, for the comfort of a superficial synthesis. The "will to believe" is not so strong as that. What they also overlook is that experience is not wholly a sub-cutaneous phenomenon. Why argue? Simply because conversation is a means of discovery. It is possible for human beings in some way or other to share and discuss and criticize each other's ideas. The mere existence of language bears witness to this. But this in turn implies a common ground as the possibility of such communication—namely, the obligation of every rational being as a rational being to endeavor to avoid contradicting himself.

What this means, in terms of criticism, is that a man has a right to his standards for interpreting his experiences, of whatever sort they may be, just so long as he finds them adequate, just so long as he can maintain them consistently against all comers—and against himself. An impressionism such as this, if this *be* impressionism, is curiously plastic under the pressure of logic and of fact.

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